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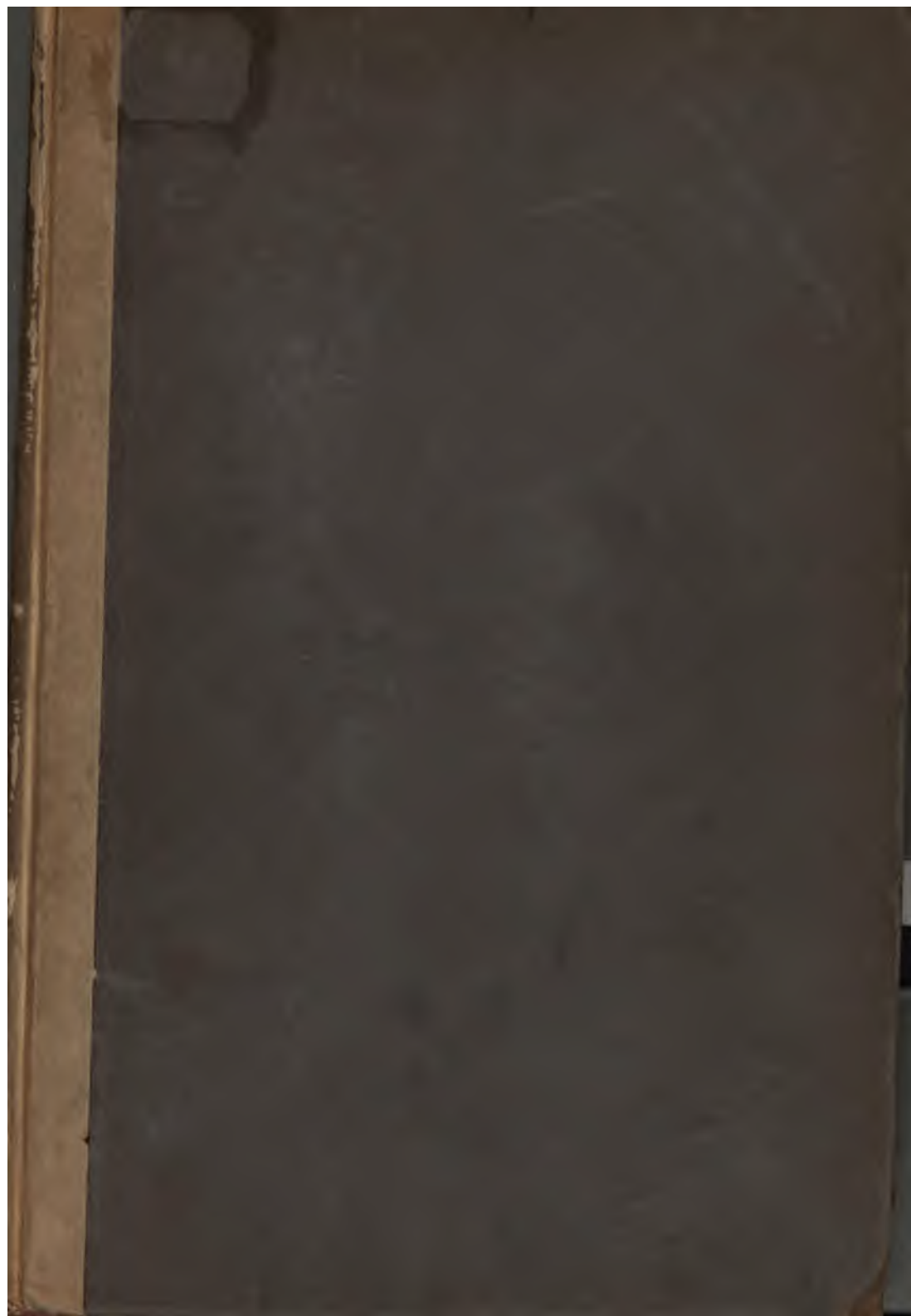
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**LESBIA**  
**AND OTHER POEMS**

**WORKS BY ARTHUR SYMONS**

**CITIES (*Illustrated*)**

**CITIES OF ITALY**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF BROWNING**  
**(*New Edition*)**

**PLAYS, ACTING AND MUSIC**

**THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT IN ENGLISH**  
**POETRY**

**SPIRITUAL ADVENTURES**

**STUDIES IN PROSE AND VERSE**

**STUDIES IN SEVEN ARTS**

**WILLIAM BLAKE**

**FIGURES OF SEVERAL CENTURIES**

**COLOUR STUDIES IN PARIS (*Illustrated*)**

**THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT IN LITERATURE**  
**(*Revised and Enlarged Edition*)**

**STUDIES IN THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA**

**E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY**

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ARTHUR SYMONS

AUTHOR OF "STUDIES IN SEVEN ARTS," "COLOUR  
STUDIES IN PARIS," ETC.



NEW YORK  
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY  
681 FIFTH AVENUE



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Printed in the United States of America

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**I LESBIA**  
**(To LESBIA.)**

1

2

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Printed in the United States of America

## VAIN PRAYER

I have prayed once, as tired men pray for sleep.  
That I might close the wakeful lids that keep  
The watch of Memory, watching on a grave.  
I have prayed once for this, only to have  
Not joy, nor love, only oblivion;  
For love, that was the joy of life is gone,  
And, going, has left a shadow in its place,  
Which is the shadow of joy's averted face.  
I have prayed once, and yet, for all my pain,  
I have rejoiced that I have prayed in vain.  
It is incredible that such desires  
Should die so meanly. God has not lit his fires  
To be puffed out by any dusty breath,  
That never lived which can accept of death.

## VUE DU LAC

Once, in this tempest of my life,  
I have been folded from the strife  
Of winds that war upon my ways,  
In the warm quiet of these bays.  
Once I have heard, with you far hence,  
The abiding sea's indifference  
Murmur continually on,  
Being content to be alone.  
And I have once endured the peace  
Of an endurable release,  
Where tranquil hours have wrought for me  
A respite from your memory.  
Once and once only ; you demand  
My heart, too joyful at your hand  
(Since from calm ways you call it home)  
To suffer the old martyrdom.

### ACCOMPLISHMENT

Why is it, since I made you thus,  
I have no peace in that I made?  
Since our desire has come to us  
Why is it I am half afraid  
To look on this that I have made?

I laughed to flight Love's innocence,  
I bade a wiser love be ours,  
Subtler in secret, to the sense,  
I spoiled of all but poisonous flowers  
The perfumed garden that was ours.

And now the poison-heavy breeze  
Searches the corners of my brain,  
And airs of unavailing peace  
Mock me in memory, and in vain  
Innocent odours haunt my brain.

I would that you and I could be  
Once more what you and I have been;  
Give back your innocence to me,  
And banish all that went between,  
All you have been, all I have been!

## VANITAS

I met you at the parting of the ways,  
And I have lingered with you certain days.

Over a little grave I had set a stone:  
I had buried love, and I was all alone.

The roadway of the unforgotten past  
Ended; the road in front lay vague and vast.

I met you at the parting of the ways,  
And I have lingered with you certain days.

Because you took my hand in both your hands,  
I think there may be help in other lands.

Because you laid your face against my face,  
I wonder if hope lives in any place.

Because you laid my head upon your breast,  
I know the earth holds yet a little rest.

## ARIA

There's a tune turns, turns in my head,  
And I hear it beat to the sound of my feet  
For that was the tune we used to walk to  
In the days that are over and dead.

Another tune turns under and over,  
And it turns my brain as I think again  
Of the days that are dead, and the ways she  
    walks now,  
To the self-same tune, with her lover.



## COLLOQUIES: I. PRIDE

O you may still be proud, my Soul replied  
To the disconsolate questioning  
Of eyes dejected from some hoped-for thing:  
You cannot live, poor fool, without your pride.  
A woman passed you in the street to-day.  
She was the fairest woman in the street,  
I watched your eyes and her eyes meet,  
And in her eyes she carried you away.

## II. THE WAITING FACE

I said to my friend's friend: Why do his eyes  
Seem to be waiting for a thing we see not?  
Why do they look before as if they waited?  
And he replied to me: His soul is waiting:  
It waits for Life that has gone by for ever,  
It waits for Life to turn upon her pathway.

I said to my friend's friend: Why do his eyes  
Seem to be listening to a thing we hear not?  
Why do they look aside as if they listened?  
And he replied to me: His soul is listening:  
It listens to the steps of Death behind him,  
The feet of Death that turn not from his pathway.

## IN SUFFERING

Lightly I wrote of leaden-footed hours,  
But never knew how heavier far than lead  
Is the unhurrying and unceasing tread  
When sleepless suffering longs for dawn, yet  
    cowers  
Into a terrified and huddled thing,  
As, listening to the passing of those feet,  
It waits and hates the dawn that can but greet  
With its own face the face of suffering.

But now, alas! but now at last I know  
How long a day is and how long a night  
When measured out in minutes, one by one;  
And half forget how short a while ago  
I dared await, without a wild affright,  
Reluctant dark and the delaying sun.

## DREAMS

Tired out with grieving over love,  
Love once so kind, so cruel grown,  
I wake into an alien day  
Of mere oblivion.

The white dawn gathers, aching white:  
Surely I had ill dreams last night?

For, lying drowsily awake,  
Desiring only to forget,  
Remembered joys return in grief,  
Kisses remembered yet,  
Her lips on mine, her lips now mine  
No more, or now no more divine.

Breathed on and dimmed, that face still haunts  
The mirror of my memory;  
Her face—but ah, it is these tears  
That hide her face from me.  
Oh Memory, from my heart remove  
Even the memory of love!

## ROME

I set all Rome between us: with what joy I set  
The wonder of the world against my world's delight.

Rome, that hast conquered worlds, with intellectual might

Capture my heart, and teach my memory to forget!

## DREAMS IN ROME

To dream or love, and, waking, to remember you :  
As though, being dead, one dreamed of heaven,  
and woke in hell.  
At night my lovely dreams forget the old farewell :  
Ah ! wake not, by his side, lest you remember too !

## MAGIC

If I go to the ends of the Earth, shall I find her  
there,

The woman I loved and who loved me and left me  
alone?

If I go to the hell of men's hatred, shall I find her  
hair

Scented as Satan's, who jibes at God on His  
throne?

If I find my way across the passionate Sea,  
And sail in a sailing ship that the sea-wave clips,  
Shall I hear her laugh as the winds laugh, laugh-  
ing at me?

Never on Earth nor in Hell shall her lips touch  
my lips.

## BY THE FOUNTAIN

I remember so well when we crept down the stair  
From the room we had loved in, made bright  
With the light in the room and the night in her  
hair  
Into the heart of the night.

The light of the night was not utterly gone  
Nor the light that shone on the stair:  
With no moon in the sky, by the Fountain alone  
With the heart of the night in her hair.



## ON LIFE AND LOVE

Now until all the world is over  
There's but one Love and there's but one Lover,  
Or two at most, that I can discover.  
For as no love can be counted nor told  
In letters of gold—gold can miscarry——  
There's no use at all for such lovers to marry.  
So is it now, so was it of old.  
Now the face of a woman to a man is fairer——  
Fairer than hell or than heaven above——  
To a soul that's all afire with love,  
And cares not to think if Satan snare her.  
If heaven's above and hell is under  
The earth we tread on, while the light lingers,  
We two shall never be rent asunder.  
See, I hold her hand in my fingers——  
You, that have seen her not, know not her wonder.

## THE STORM

You will not come out of the Storm?  
The door is opened wide.  
The wind howls wildly, inside all is warm.  
I cannot step outside.

I know you would not come to me if I died,  
You whose body is warm.  
For you no more shall the door be opened  
    wide,  
For you the wind and storm.

## THE HEART

Why are you next to my heart?  
You were once you, I was I.  
Then did you make me start,  
Then, when you used to lie?

Gone you are and your truth,  
And a mere thing makes me start.  
Why did you give me your youth  
When you were next to my heart?

## SONNET

Since all's not over, and the stars depart,  
And you are here who go from me to-night,  
Shall either of us ask the other's heart  
Why love was ours, and why I used to write  
Songs of our passion that you always kept  
Out of your mother's sight, not out of yours,  
That when you woke at nights or when you  
slept  
Were part of you, and seeing what one en-  
dures  
Has been so and so must be till we pass  
What's called the Exit upon every Stage,  
As you when your dance was over: will the  
glass  
Of Memory, that has shown in every Age  
Faces of lovers loving, leave no trace  
Of ours, that on the Stage met face to face?

## LAMIA

She is the very Lamia of my soul.  
Does she not bite subtly? Yea, she leaves one  
whole  
Red spot, here in my side, where most I feel  
The snake untrodden by the woman's heel.  
And she as Lamia veritably trod,  
With snake's feet and snake's wings, the ground  
when God  
Planted the Tree of Evil and of Good.  
Is she not in the blood that feeds my blood?  
Where did she bite most cruelly? Near the heart.  
O Lamia, Lamia, will you never depart?

## THE GIFT

You, most unlikely of all things,  
To have met after all my wanderings,  
What gift was given me, what gift of grace,  
To have seen again your passionate face,  
Nor nights nor days have bereft me of,  
To have seen those eyes where some tragical love  
Flown from Eternity found its nest?  
Gone all the ardours that heaved your breast  
When you lay in my arms and I kissed you close  
And your mouth on my mouth was the mystical  
    rose?  
Lesbia you were, Lesbia you are not. Come,  
Ashes of love, and find for yourselves a home.



**II INTERMEZZO**  
**(To THE MEMORY OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE)**





## NINI PATTE-EN-L'AIR

(Casino de Paris)

The gold Casino's Spring parterre  
Flowers with the Spring, this golden week;  
Glady, Toloche, Valtesse, are there;  
But all eyes turn as one to seek  
The drawers of Nini Patte-en-l'air.

Surprising, sunset-coloured lace,  
In billowy clouds of gold and red,  
They whirl and flash before one's face;  
The little heel above her head  
Points an ironical grimace.

And mark the experimental eyes,  
The naughty eloquence of feet,  
The appeal of subtly quivering thighs,  
The insinuations indiscreet  
Of pirouetting draperies.

What exquisite indecency,  
Select, supreme, severe, an art!  
The art of knowing how to be

Part lewd, aesthetical in part,  
And *fin de siècle* essentially.

The Maenad of the Decadence,  
Collectedly extravagant,  
Her learned fury wakes the sense  
That, fainting, needs for excitant  
This science of concupiscence.

## PROLOGUE: BEFORE THE THEATRE

The play, who should praise? Praise rather the  
actors who play!

Would you not say, as you watch, that we lived  
our parts,

You who sit and watch our playing to-day,

We of each other, and almost our hearts to our  
hearts,

And almost, I fancy, the Author himself as well?

He gave us our words in his story, but could he  
have dreamed

We should take for our own the story he set us to  
tell,

And be, for our moment, the thing that we need  
but have seemed?

I swear to you, first-born and last of my heart's  
one love,

That I love you not; you who love me believe  
me; and you

Sob in my ears that you cannot hate me enough,

And I go on my way, and I say to my heart: It  
is true!

And to you, O friend, who are tender and loving  
and wise,

And a friend out of all to be loved, but by other  
men,

I swear that I love you, calling my soul to my  
eyes,

And alas! my friend, you always believe me  
then.

How well we play our parts! Do you ever guess,  
You as you sit on the footlights' fortunate side,  
That we, we haply falter with weariness,

And haply the cheeks are pale that the blush-  
paints hide,

And haply we crave to be gone from out of your  
sight,

And to say to the Author: O our master and  
friend,

Dear Author, let us off for a night, one night!

Then we will come back, and play our parts  
to the end!

## AT A MUSIC-HALL

The loud, oppressive orchestra,  
Panting its sultry music out,  
Is as the voice of heat without,  
And, throbbing hotly, pulses "Ah,  
The wind upon the woods without!"

The glittering ballet curves and winds  
Bewildering broideries of heat;  
I feel the weariness of feet,  
And how the footlights' mirror blinds  
The aching eyeballs soaked with heat.

Here in the stalls I sit and sigh  
For the renewal of the sea;  
I hear the cool waves calling me,  
Where wave to cool wave makes reply  
On the Mediterranean sea.

## LOVE AND ART

The sun went indistinguishably down  
Over the murky town,  
Night droops about the houses heavily;  
The Temple gateways gape and frown,  
But, as I enter, strangely, comes to me  
The odour of patchouli.

Ah, there she flits before me, whose gay scent  
Betrays the way she went;  
A corner intercepts her, she is gone;  
And as I follow, indolent,  
My visiting mind, with her to muse upon,  
Runs curiously on.

I seem to hear her mount the narrow stair,  
Creaking, for all her care;  
And now a door flies open, just above,  
And now she laughs, to see him there,  
His arms about her, and both babble of  
The nonsense-verse of love.

I enter and forget them, for to-night  
I have my verse to write;  
That love-song, I have yet to pare and trim.  
So should it be? or—God! the light  
In that revealing casement-square grows dim:  
He kisses her, and I but write of him!



## NEW YEAR'S EVE

I strolled in the midnight homeward along the  
Strand,  
And I heard the bells ring out for the new-born  
year,  
And the tavern's light and the church's on either  
hand,  
Shone, and the sound of a voice was in my ear.

Feeble, vibrating, faint as the voice of night,  
Out of the darkness came the caressing voice;  
And the church's light on the left, and the light  
on the right,  
Shone, and the voice on the right said: "Make  
your choice!"

And I saw in a dream the hours of the years to be,  
Tossed like foam from the billowy bells on high;  
And I heard their voices, like the sound of the  
sea,  
Call to me out of the future: I heard them  
cry:

---

“We, the hours of the year that to-night hath born,  
Hold in our hands the gifts of the year to-night:  
Choose, for the choice is yours ere the night be  
morn;

Choose, for the choice is yours ere the dark be  
light.”

Then I saw that the church loomed up like a wall  
of cloud

And the tavern window glowed like a ball of  
fire,

And I heard the caressing voice that spake aloud  
The will of my flesh and the whisper of my  
desire.

## STELLA MALIGNA

### I

#### STELLAE FIGURA

Her beauty has the serpent's undulant grace,  
The rhythm and flow of softly fluctuant line;  
And in the stealthy contours of her face,  
And in her eyes, the charm is serpentine.

Her eyes have gleams that shine implacably,  
A glitter cold and sharp as swords; they smile  
Subtly as Vivien by the cloven tree  
On Merlin growing careless of her guile.

Her face in smiling wakes strange memories,  
Memories of death and old forgotten woe;  
Her eyes are pools where many a drowned hope  
lies,  
They shine above the dead who sleep below.

The very charm of death is in her look,  
The fascination of all delicate deaths  
Of mortals who in easeful ways forsook  
The taking of so many weary breaths.

Her beauty is the mask of spectral nights;  
    She smiles, and tells no secret. Lips so red  
Are roses for a garden of delights,  
    Surely, and never any garden-bed,  
Flushed with a ruddier fragrance:—what of  
    dreams!  
    Only shake loose the perfume of thy hair,  
And let me bathe in those delirious streams,  
    Stella, and I intoxicate despair!

## II

## LAUS STELLAE

Thy beauty is a garden planted  
    With tropic flowers of poisonous breath,  
Where, in the odorous air enchanted,  
    Naught blossoms but the flowers of Death.  
There pale insatiate shadows creep,  
    Sated, yet still unsatiated;  
Nor dost thou fear, so calm they sleep,  
    The resurrection of the dead.  
Spells of Thessalian sorceresses,  
    Philtres in magic moonlights brewed,  
Herbs plucked in ancient wildernesses  
    Of noon-tide deepened solitude,—

Pale witchcraft of the earlier world,  
Thy subtle poison mocks, whose cup,  
Sparkling and delicately impearled,  
Once drained, shall drain all reason up.

They who drink deep of that sweet poison  
Put by the wholesome fruits of earth;  
They pine where ineffectual foison  
Makes sorer their inveterate dearth.

Thy tresses are an odorous bower  
Deep-scented as, in seas afar,  
The blue and burning noontide hour  
Wakes on the shores of Malabar.

Is not thy voice the voice of Lethe?  
Is not thy kiss remembered well  
Where over thee and underneath thee  
The vague mists wrap the ways to hell?

The charm and terror of thine eyes  
Whisper: there may be, even so,  
Airs of remembered Paradise  
On brows of angels now in woe.

## III

## STELLAE ANIMA CLAMAT

She sat before her mirror, and she gazed  
Deep into eyes that gazed at her again.  
Oh, what sad ghosts her mournful memory  
raised——

Ghosts of the days that pass and are in vain.

She saw her youth, her youth that passed; she saw  
The lovers for whose hearts she played and won.  
She saw her beauty hold the world in awe,  
Triumphing over all beneath the sun.

She saw her slain revive, the tombless dead,  
Dead souls that dwell in mortal bodies yet.  
She heard the maledictions that they said  
Before a bar of judgment ever set.

These were her lovers; she to them had been  
The *Rosa mystica*—rose passion-pale!  
The poison 'neath the petals slept unseen;  
For she was beautiful, and man is frail.

These all rose up against her in her past;  
All these she took no thought of; but her pride  
The mirror vanquished: "Youth is fleeting fast,  
And I have never tasted love!" she cried.

"O God, that I might yet before all goes

Once more be loved, and once, the last and first,  
Love! I have been, yet never plucked, the rose;  
And I have quenched, yet never felt, that thirst

"Whereby we put on immortality.

Is it too late I find it? must the sod  
Press down this body that is all of me,  
And shall not Love survive it, who is God?"

Thus, counselled of her mirror, will she lay  
Sure snares, as Lilith wove her golden hair;  
And someone coming softly by the way  
Shall suddenly be taken unaware.

Alas for him! for it were better much  
That he had never yet begun to be.  
If, when she loved for play, her love was such,  
That, when she loves for love's sake, shall it be?

## CORRUPTIO OPTIMI PESSIMA

(On a drawing).

The smoky locks that twist about that brow  
In anguish of rebellion, are the same  
That bore the laurel, when the mouth's acclaim  
(Wide with unspeakable woes and cursings now)  
Woes heard among the sons of God, whose vow  
Is ever toward the Highest. What strong shame  
Has burnt upon this visage like a flame  
Afire upon a temple,—strong to bow  
The columns of its strength, and blacken all  
The sacred writing on the pictured wall,  
And lay the altar low and ruinous?  
Where, when the fire has had its will, there lies  
Of all once holiest underneath the skies,  
A heap, a ruin, black and hideous.



## THE DANCE OF THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

*A large and empty room, with a door on the right  
and an open fireplace on the left. On each  
side of the fireplace sit an old MAN AND  
WOMAN representing the Body and the Soul;  
THE MAN holds an hour-glass in his hand,  
THE WOMAN a staff, with which she stirs the  
fire of logs.*

### THE SOUL

O brother Body, we are old.  
What is this numb and trembling cold  
That sets us shaking like thin boughs?  
Is it not winter in the House?  
Sit closer to the fire and stir  
The logs till they are cheerfuller,  
And put a warmth into our knees;  
And think no more of memories,  
When we were younger, and could feel  
The blood in use from head to heel.

THE BODY

O Soul, my sister, is it you  
That now I must give answer to?  
You who of old when I was sick  
Would heal me by some heavenly trick,  
And set before me when I would  
The meat of dreams to be my food?  
Have you forgotten with our youth  
That what we will for truth is truth,  
And that the flames have always been  
A mirror where our eyes have seen  
The dancers of those ecstasies  
That were to our first opening eyes  
Immortal spirits, exultant flames,  
Names with the seven unspoken names?

THE SOUL

I can call up those dancers.

THE BODY

Call  
The dancers up, and let them all  
Dance the old way, and let them each  
Speak the old way, or some new speech.  
Call up the dancers.

## THE SOUL

All is vain.  
We live, and living is the pain  
We die of while we live. This earth  
Was made in some celestial mirth  
Not for our pleasure. I who seem  
But to remember in a dream  
Some sleep bewildered thoroughfare,  
Dream not, remember, and despair.

## THE BODY

Dream always, and remember not.  
I, if I dreamed, have yet forgot  
Even the sleep. One hour I hold  
An hour-glass sifting sands of gold.  
Call in the dancers, for they give  
Bonds to the moment fugitive,  
Wings to the moment slow to pass;  
Shake out the sands in the hour-glass,  
Sister, O Soul, call back to-night  
My dancers, spirits of delight!

*The door opens and the STAGE-MANAGER, in a  
mediæval dress, comes in and goes up to the  
front of the stage and says:*

Here, to the Soul's and Body's eyes,  
Out of the flames seven spirits rise;  
Now the first spirit, Lust, begins  
The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins.

*While he is speaking the door again opens and a DRAPED FIGURE Enters. The STAGE-MANAGER retires to the right hand side of the stage, and stands watching every movement. The DRAPED FIGURE, after a few steps in a slow dance movement, stands behind THE BODY and THE SOUL, unseen by them, looking into the fire as if into a mirror, and speaks. He is LUST. Each Sin dances in turn.*

THE SOUL

O Body, is it true that I  
Gave to the Worm the wings to fly?

*SLOTH Enters and Speaks*

THE SOUL

Body, this spirit whose slow feet  
Scarce stir the tiniest flame to beat,  
Has surely drunk out of your veins  
This slave's quiescence in its chains;  
I have no part nor lot therein.

## THE BODY

Thereby is Sloth the less a sin.

*AVARICE Enters and Speaks*

## THE BODY

This burdened spirit is of both,  
This busy Kinswoman of Sloth,  
This curb upon our speed, this guest  
Beneath the table at the feast,  
Who, sated, like a dog would hoard  
The bones he snatches from the board.

*GLUTTONY Enters and Speaks*

## THE BODY

This sacred spirit of excess  
Speaks wisdom in its wantonness.  
Sister, my Soul, know all fruits  
That grow with earth about their roots,  
And there is nothing more divine  
Than I have tasted in earth's wine;  
Yet, filled and drunken, I have sigh'd,  
Unsated and unsatisfied,  
For those far fruits of Paradise,  
The heavenly orchard of your eyes.

*ANGER Enters and Speaks*

THE SOUL

O Body, my kind enemy,  
This is the voice that speaks in me  
When, for the love of that delight  
Which is your presence day and night,  
I pour my anger for your good  
Over you, like a searching flood.  
O Body, it is late; the sands  
Sink through the hour-glass in your hands,  
And where the fiery dancers are  
The word's last ashes slowly char,  
And I am cold again. The voice  
Of Anger is a foolish noise,  
A foolish and unfriendly thing,  
Body, not worth remembering.

PRIDE *Enters and Speaks*

THE SOUL

We, too, O Body, have been proud;

THE BODY

Yea, as a dead man of his shroud.

THE SOUL

I, even as Pride, have lifted up  
The one intoxicating cup  
Of all the knowledge of the world.

## THE BODY

And I, as Pride, have snatched and hurled  
The cup of Knowledge in the dust,  
With hands of force and feet of lust.

*ENVY Enters and Speaks*

## ENVY

My name is Envy among men.  
I am the eyes of love, and when  
The lover looks upon the eyes  
That casket all his Paradise,  
I am the longing greed of him,  
And my desire makes bright the dim  
Reflection of all lovely things  
With covetous imaginings,  
And of unlovely things I make  
Things lovely for my longing's sake.  
I am desire of good, desire  
Of beauty, I alone inspire  
Perfecting thirsts that emulate  
Each last draught of the ultimate.  
I know no measure, nothing is  
Unsought by my swift avarice;  
That would unyoke the shining seven  
Pleiades from the shafts of heaven,

Unanchor the moon's crescent boat,  
Ravish the song from the bird's throat,  
And from all mortal sweets distil  
The elixir of the impossible.  
Man knows me not; he calls my name  
Envy, not knowing what I am.  
I speak all tongues; also I speak  
The learning all the ages seek,  
Some capture, and all leave behind;  
I take the earth into my mind,  
Unto my heart I gather love.  
I lust not, nor sloth—heavy move,  
No miser nor no wine-bibber,  
Nor is my tongue hasty to stir,  
Nor my eyes proud; but I am wise  
As the snake's tongue, the woman's eye.

THE BODY

Dancers, I tire of you. I tire  
Of all desire save one desire.

THE SOUL

Dancers, I tire of you. I tire  
Of all desire save one desire:  
That I were free of you. Mine eyes  
Are heavy with your mockeries.



Dancers, I am more tired than you.  
When shall the dance be danced all through?  
The fire is nearly dead; and one  
By one the last sands fall; the sun  
Will meet the darkness on its way.  
O Body, is it nearly day?

THE BODY

Would it were that last day of days!

*The STAGE-MANAGER comes forward to the front  
of the Stage and says:*

Does not each morning that decays  
To midnight end the world as well,  
In the world's day, as that farewell  
When, at the ultimate judgment-stroke,  
Heaven too shall vanish in pale smoke?

## HELEN AND FAUSTUS

### I

The famous Faustus is not dead.  
I tell you that his spirit lied.  
His body burst his coffin-lead  
The third day after he had died.  
So in the Legend it is said,  
Also that Knowledge was his Bride.  
Some say he perished in his pride,  
But I say no. The books he read  
Were part and parcel of his soul  
But he was made to be unwise.  
What weight has wisdom when the skies  
Hid from this learned man the hole  
Into the which he had to stumble?  
The Devils in Hell are never humble.

### II

The Devil tempted him. He came  
Winged, wordless, into Faustus' room,  
And in his eyes the infernal flame  
Shone, and he lighted up the gloom.

Now Faustus heard another name  
That was not his. Senses consume  
Themselves as, with her intense perfume,  
The word was Helen. Hot with shame  
The Wizard's visage was drawn in  
As if he saw a certain thing  
And not of his imagining  
That danced in the air, that painted Sin  
After the old inevitable fashion  
When Lilith gave the snake her passion.

## III

Here where I write the Sea-gulls shout  
That have the spirits of the storm  
In their winged bodies, ringed about  
With beauty more than woman's; warm  
In winter when the wolves are out.  
God gave them an inhuman face  
No Satan ever can deform.  
To Faustus the eternal Doubt  
Came and the colours of the World  
Were changed and purple turned to blood  
In the magic circle where he stood,  
And then a venomous Serpent curled  
Into no hideous shape but loathing  
All other than his painted clothing.

## IV

Now Helen's spirit was a bird  
And she an untired Wanderer  
To whom all loveless words unheard  
Were subtle to the sense of her;  
She, kissed by Paris, for a word  
That stung like salt. None lovelier  
Drew in her breath, none lovelier  
Drew in her breath, when she was stirred  
By all that world of Sea and Stone  
On her lone island, where the Sea  
Shook her imagination furiously.  
She loved no beauty save her own,  
And, as she walked in that white city,  
Men said of her: "She has no pity."

## V

Love was not ever for her enough.  
She felt no throbbing in her heart  
At the mere utterance of Love.  
She nothing had but Beauty. Art  
To her was less than woven stuff  
Her Asian-maids wove; she, apart,  
Waited for visions to depart  
No Asian moons had knowledge of.  
She knew the turning of the Wheel

Of Destiny might bruise her heel  
As slaves do when they slay a snake.  
Knew she that flames may be fain to steal  
Their own flames and make Troy to reel  
And simply for her's, Helen's, sake?

## VI

I have forgotten Faustus. He  
Has dropt in fear his magic book  
Because the buzzing of a bee  
Attracts him with its strange rebuke.  
Then suddenly in irony  
His conjuring-wand from out its nook  
Falls. Satan's eyes have changed their look.  
Now, as a wind-blown tapestry  
Shakes and the paintings on it change  
Their aspects, and the very dust  
Stirs on the floor, it seems most strange  
That he, now in the spirit's toil,  
Should have the sense in him to spoil  
The Architecture of his Lust.

## VII

Suddenly the Arch-Demon spoke.  
"Faustus, I come to you from Hell.  
Some souls are burdened by the yoke

Of chastisement irrevocable.  
There Arctino cries 'Souls to sell !'  
Writhes in imagination to invoke  
Some scandalous and obscene joke.  
He sees gigantic serpents swell  
Bigger than ever ; and he, lithe  
Still, loves to see them as they writhe.  
Soon all his merriment is over.  
A woman comes and laughs at him  
Showing seductiveness of limb  
She showed on earth to her last lover.

## VIII

"I come to bargain for your soul,  
Your Soul, whole-fashioned for your Sin  
Which has not fathomed yet the whole  
Of Evil that is compassed in  
A virgin-martyr's aureole.  
There are many doors that open in  
One Hell to which souls may not win  
Unless they enter, shoal by shoal,  
Past even your imagining  
Of the immensity of your Fall.  
You might as well ask a naked wall  
As ask of me this only thing:  
'When shall I fall in the Pits of Evil ?'  
Where there's no God, there's no Devil !"

## IX

Then something sinister takes place  
All of a sudden. The hour-glass  
Stops dropping silent grains; a race  
Of shadows, mocking shadows pass;  
The ceiling like a drunk ship sways;  
No minute passes as it was;  
The floor heaves up, the floor turns grass;  
And on the spirit of Faustus weighs  
As the eternity of a verse  
The condemnation that shall capture  
The intimate limits of his flesh  
Irrevocably now in Satan's mesh,  
And unimaginably worse  
Than the sinful body's ultimate rapture.

## X

Down the blown valleys of the Sea  
He shudders and the race begins  
Of waters heaving heavily  
Over his head and something spins  
A devil's web that arrogantly  
Sets water-rats to shake their shins  
And all the flesh that is his skin's  
Is changed immensely. Is this he

That in his utter anguish craves  
More than the immunity of slaves  
That desire nothing but damnation?  
All's lost. See how a madman raves  
Hurled this and that way by the waves  
Down the long way to Annihilation!

## XI

He rises shaken out of sleep  
And sees no spirit there but one  
Whose eyes are fathomless and deep  
As the sea's depths when day has won  
Its way from night. Steep after steep  
Rises, he sees her eyes: nay, none,  
None lovelier ever saw the sun  
Out of the fiery ocean leap.  
Her eyes have known Eternity,  
Her mouth that smiles not is most cruel.  
And all her body is a wonder.  
Hades she haunts, has heard Hell thunder.  
What is more cruel than a jewel  
That flames, laughs, lightens furiously?

## XII

As from the bowl one spills the wine  
And then one overturns the bowl,  
Helen's long laughing eyes divine



Shine as the symbol of her soul.  
Now Faustus wavers, mad, malign,  
She turns upon him with the whole  
Of her white purity, love's goal.  
"Faustus, you never shall be mine.  
It is so long since I have been dead  
I know not why I breathe the air  
For in the grave there is no sighing.  
To have slept for centuries in one bed  
God knows I had reason to be fair:  
God knows if there's an end of dying."

## XIII

The famous Faustus is not dead.  
Now, as for Helen, has she gone  
Back to the eternity of her bed  
That she alone has slept upon?  
The world goes on; over her head  
Men pass and women: she, ever alone,  
Lies, lonelier than any stone.  
I would that all the words she said  
Were written; these, alas, are lost.  
Her, not the uncounted years destroy  
If she were angry as a ghost,  
What would the wind say and the frost,  
For she the gate of Death has crossed,  
Of all that remains of Helen and Troy?

## HELEN

That heavenly Helen, whose hot lips  
The felon's heart of Paris close,  
A city's hell, a hell of seven ships,  
Hell of men's hearts, in her alcove  
Sees shapes of saffron, shapes of mauve,  
Move, wave, until the inevitable  
Stings of desire as serpents' stings  
Give her the after-taste of hell.  
See how the soul within her springs  
From the woven robe that to her clings,  
About a body made too fair  
For any woman to endure:  
That beauty and that heavy hair,  
Those eyes that many passions lure,  
That flesh so pure to the impure,  
The impure that mock her in the streets  
And follow her to the market-place.  
O Helen of the sensual heats  
The blood gives when the sun's disgrace  
Sheds all his heat, now over Thrace,  
Now over Argos, will you not,  
Now that the dark falls and the gloom

Of night begins, begin to plot  
With me in your close-scented room  
More than the odour of your perfume  
Can give to any man but one,  
One, your last lover? See the fire  
Of sunset's over and the sun  
Descends: the moon has her desire.  
This hour our Destiny has spun  
A web that might unweave the sun.

## A SONG FOR HELEN

O how her tide did burn  
Against the sun's heat,  
Now in a little urn,  
Hushed her heart's beat,  
Helen's most piteous dust  
Must come to nought!  
Nothing but love and lust  
Left, and our thought.

## SONG

A song for Helen who shall sing  
That adores Helen as his breath  
And holds the world a trivial thing  
Beside the majesty of Death?

Her beauty wrought the world no wrong,  
Men's souls she fastened in her snare:  
Who now shall sing an idle song  
Into the void imperishable air?

**III BIRDS IN THE NIGHT**  
**(To IRIS)**



## MUSIC

Music for joy:

Joy waits on sadness to be sweet;

Music is sad,

And waits on gladness to complete

The unimaginable joy where joy and sor-  
row meet.

Music for love,

When love lies dreaming of delight;

Music when love

Shines upward on an angel's flight;

And for all happy lovers music, music day  
and night.

Bid music cease,

When love is said, when love would weep;

Music is sad,

For her exultant voices keep

Endless desire, infinite sorrow, but not  
hope nor sleep.



## THE GYPSY'S SONG

The Gypsy said: I'm here to thrive,  
The earth he is my bed,  
But as for coming here to wive,  
The Devil strike me dead!

I've had enough of Concubines,  
To last for ever so long;  
There's always taverns for drinking  
wines—  
Let's end the night with a song.

We loves to jiv along the roads,  
We and our Caravans,  
And when we comes on hopping toads  
Chais lift their hands like fans.

We always loves to light a fire  
Near by the gorse and sedge;  
It smokes and then it rises higher:  
Liz leans against the hedge.

We always loves of the air its scent  
And all the winds that pass,

---

And then we fix with thorns our Tent—  
Smoke scars the greenest grass.

Now if I wishes for anything  
In hell or up above  
The blood's on fire for wandering  
And the heart in me burns for love.

### A DRINKING SONG

I give you my lips to drink,  
I give you in truth  
Less than you choose to think  
In your wild youth  
Of how wine is lifted up,  
One's song is sung,  
And that your mouth's the cup  
And that you're young.

## SONG FOR ISEULT

The Heart cries for light  
And the soul for Desire  
In the midst of the Night  
In the heart of the Fire.  
They cry for all things  
That are and that were.  
Desire alone brings  
All the night in her hair  
To me as I sit  
And gaze on the fire.  
Finite and infinite  
Are the Gods of the Fire!

## THE CURLEW

Thrice have I heard the Curlew cry.  
Thrice, as the ominous bird of night  
And as the sea-foam was scattered high  
And the naked dancers in the sky  
Had given over dancing, and an evil eye  
Shone like hell's fire, and the angel of light  
Had folded his wings, not as the wings  
Of the wind-blown sea-gulls that laugh as they fly  
And hide in their hidden hearts such things  
As they alone know of, I was aware  
Of a sudden heat and a change in the air  
And the opening somewhere of a door  
That opened on nothing, but out of it shone—  
Transverse on the sea-waves' shifting floor—  
A light more strange than when night is come  
And the new dawn burns. Lo and it turns,  
Turns on itself, and the sea's floor burns,  
And the very space before me is thinned,  
And the thing that looms there, is it not I?  
Thrice have I heard the Curlew cry  
And thrice I have cried with the voice of the  
wind.

## OLD BONES

He'll never make old bones,  
At least I think not;  
He'll sit on the ancient stones,  
At least he shall drink not  
Of wounds that are worse than moans;  
But if he shall sink not  
Under a woman's burden he'll live on  
Under a toad-like stone,  
And, as far as he can prove it,  
Shall try to love it,  
Being more utterly inhuman  
Than any woman  
God ever made out of clay.  
The stone's image shall vanish away  
And the woman at his side  
Shall be one of the images  
Made by the evil ones  
Out of the ruins of moons and suns,  
Not out of the whirling tide  
Of the imaginary seas;  
She shall be no man's bride,  
None shall bend at her knees.

And, before the world turns over  
And tries to sleep,  
This love-drunken man shall be her lover,  
Blood between them shall leap—  
Blood shall cry out for blood,  
And down from the mountains steep  
There shall be blood on the flood,  
Men's blood under the stones;  
And, as long as the world shall sleep,  
He'll never make old bones.

## THE AGATE

I cut an agate for a stone  
And this I put into a cleft  
And I was with the wind alone  
And nothing else of me was left,  
But what in cutting it I had lost.  
Now had one lost the wind and rain  
One had no reason, even a ghost  
Has much more reasoning than men.  
And still I wander on alone  
And there's a something in my mind,  
Of having cut an agate-stone  
That jogs at me from far behind  
And makes me more uneasy than one  
Who having not counted up the time  
Knows that the deed he has not done  
Counts for an agate in his crime.



## IN THE WOODS

I have made a beautiful fire:  
I am in haste to be gone.  
The winds and the woods had the sound of a  
    lyre,  
And my feet were tangled by many a briar,  
And the sun went out and the moon mounted  
    higher,  
And the tall thick grasses I trod upon  
Were soft and sweet to my rapid feet,  
And the man I walked with was one  
Who loved nature much more than I did.  
For myself, being proud, whatever my pride  
    did,  
That I forgot in the simple pleasure  
Of being very much at my leisure;  
So that, in the very heart of the wood  
A bird's voice sang to my blood.

## DUST

There is a demon in the mind  
And an evil wind that blows behind  
The dust of the world in one heap to bind.

He follows us as the moon the sun—  
He says, "What have I done? I have done  
The deed that I dare not think upon."

We fly from him to the arms of sleep,  
And sleep refuses sleep. We steep  
Our senses in the dust that's a-heap.

## SONG

When there's a noise among the dead  
That perished in the night  
Enough to waken in their bed  
Slim girls with heels that smite  
A man's bare flesh, heels with their heels,  
And bodies side by side,  
It's awful to think what a dead man feels  
With Death for his only bride.

## THE ADDER

If anything on earth be found  
To root our feet upon the ground  
It must be one  
Thing and one single thing alone:  
A glass of wine  
That makes the sun much less divine  
And makes the subtle moon to wain  
And casts the slayer from the stain.

After the solace of our verse  
The next thing is the Art to curse  
Someone we hate.  
"O Adder at my garden gate  
That have your passions night by night,  
Please me and bite  
Before the sun has fallen low  
Mine enemy and not your foe."

At which mine Adder ceased to glide  
And glared at me in sullen pride  
And lifted up  
His head that does not care to stoop,

And said to me:

"Nay, not thine ancient enemy,  
For he is less than anything——  
Less than the least—to deserve my sting.

"The poison that I hide within  
This sinful thing that is my skin,  
From evil sprung,  
Surges into my cloven tongue.  
The Devil made  
Me out of some unholy shade;  
But, as you see I suck this root,  
The Devil has no cloven foot.

"Once in the Garden of God I trod,  
When Satan was mine only God;  
And, by these stings  
The Devil knows if I had wings.  
There Lilith grew  
Out of a drop of poisoned dew;  
And, by her blood, by which I fell,  
Beware of the Garden-Gate of Hell!"

## SALOME

When Salome lifting up  
In her painted hands the cup,  
Symbol of her virginhood,  
Her perverse, pure eyes malign  
See, instead of signs of wine,  
Frantic, to her vision, blood.

One foot twisted in advance  
In the rhythm of the dance  
Beats upon the perfumed floor.  
Now a sound upon her jars  
Like the sound of iron bars,  
Like the clashing of a door.

The winds tangle round her waist,  
On her lips she feels the taste,  
Taste forbidden to her lips.  
What is this that she drinks in?  
Is it that the House of Sin  
Her imagination grips?

Morbid ardour in her grows,  
In her cheek no colour glows,

Heat of anguish in her stirs:  
What is this she sees in space,  
Hanging in mid-air, a face,  
Lifeless, sinister as hers?

Stung by sterile stings of drouth  
All the hotness of her mouth  
Makes her aching senses thirst  
For that thing that cannot be:  
Hate of her Virginity,  
Seizes on her, She, the Accursed!

Shaken as the snakes in grass  
Eyes her wan Herodias,  
Daughter of a King of Kings.  
Herod, writhing on his throne,  
Feels her fingers to the bone  
Clutching at his jewelled rings.

## THE FLAMES OF HELL

These women had gold hair about their brows  
While they were living: now the worm feels that,  
Feeding upon their flesh. They shall rise up,  
Not till *that* day, when God shall call for them;  
But they shall rise. O women that have sinned,  
Shall God have pity? God shall not have pity.  
There is much gold hair that the flames of hell  
Shall take fast hold on. Bodies are not white  
For heaven, where the blood shall wash them  
clean:

These women's bodies are too white; sweet scents  
Burn fiercely; there's a fragrant pile for hell.  
O mystery of beauty, and this flesh  
God hath no part in! yet so beautiful.  
Man born of woman, born under the law,  
Conceived in sin, sins most of all in this,  
And takes damnation on him with a kiss.  
And these lips rotted into dust! Graves hide  
The end of women's beauty; a kind friend,  
Close and discreet; but we'll not think of that.  
Paris would loathe his Helen could he see her,  
But Paris too is dust. I'm breathing yet,



Although I haunt the tombs; and are there not  
Women, with golden hair about their brows,  
This side the mould? and they are calling me,  
They smile, their eyes are as a light, I run,  
I would embrace them, and drink down at once  
Death, and the second Death. O I am sick,  
Sick toward the ending, and mine eyes draw in  
Distempered visions. But this kills me. Come,  
Women my flesh and spirit tremble for;  
Delay no longer, O delay not, see,  
I call to you, I stretch my hands, come, come,  
I can not do without you—It is vain  
This violence of passion leaves me faint.  
Dead women, be my brides once more. Not Death  
Shall be more amorous of you; not the clods  
Clip you with closer arms. Mine, mine, all mine.  
And there is all this beauty underground,  
And there their worm dieth not, nor is the flame  
Quenched, but these fair women that have sinned  
Shall have their portion in the burning lake,  
And so live beautiful for ever. God,  
Have this much pity, let men look across  
The great gulf hewn of nether air, that holds  
A void of footless darkness, let them see  
Pale, with their branch of barren palm, their robes  
Glimmering in the brighter light than day,

---

Those saints, their rivals : grant them this, O God !  
They, beautiful for ever, shall rejoice  
Even in the flames of hell, despising still  
Those women who are haggard even in heaven !

## EPITHALAMIUM

Sister, the bride-bed waits; sister for thee;  
The bride-bed waits for thee and me.  
Sisterly hours together, hand in hand,  
Beat out an epithalamy:  
Love and the night, come softly, hand in hand!

Love and the night, come swiftly, hand in hand,  
That we may reach the longed for land,  
O night of love, before the dark be dead,  
Or the pale morning understand  
Why the moon faints and why the stars lie dead.

Sister, the moon shall faint, the stars lie dead,  
Sister, above our marriage-bed,  
The fruitless stars, the chaste and sterile moon,  
While we, in maiden nuptial wed,  
Taunt with her single maidenhood the moon.

Sister, O sister maiden, maiden moon,  
The joy, the aching joy to swoon  
Into thine arms, into thine arms to die!  
Sweet bride, thy maiden bridegroom, soon  
Into the rapture of thine arms to die!

## PIERROT

I that am Pierrot, pray you pity me!  
To be so young, so old in misery:  
See me, and how the winter of my grief  
Wastes me, and how I whiten like a leaf,  
And how, like a lost child, lost and afraid,  
I seek the shadow, I that am a shade,  
I that have loved a moonbeam, nor have won  
Any Diana to Endymion.

Pity me, for I have but loved too well  
The hope of the too fair impossible.  
Ah, it is she, she, Columbine! again  
I see her, and I woo her, and in vain.  
She lures me with her beckoning finger-tips;  
How her eyes shine for me, and how her lips  
Bloom for me, roses, roses, red and rich!  
She waves to me the white arms of a witch  
Over the world: I follow, I forget  
All, but she'll love me yet, she'll love me yet!

No, I shall never, never call you mine,  
Escaping and eternal Columbine.  
Once Watteau knew you, a Marquise; you played

A pastoral of love in masquerade.  
King Louis turned his head to see you pass,  
Superbly, at Versailles, upon the grass,  
And I, poor Pierrot, turned my head away:  
You did not see the tears I wept that day.

Later, you woke from sleep when Deburau  
Found me in Paris, fifty years ago.  
I beat my wings against the footlights' glare,  
You were an actress, and I sought you there;  
And I adored you for your rouge, the grace  
Of your fictitious and diviner face;

But some one bought you. Last, a silhouette,  
You mocked me in the magic of Willette,  
Flittingly fin-de-siècle and feline at  
The hostel guarded by a Sable Cat.  
Columbine of the ages! if to-day  
I find you, in no masquerade array,  
But here, and now: oh! somewhere, surely, here,  
You hide until the moment: nay, appear!

Nay, but I see you: is it you, divine,  
Or you, perchance diviner, Columbine?  
I will go seek you, moonbeam, once again,  
And if I seek you, must it be in vain?  
Kind friends, I think 'tis she: and if 'tis she,  
I, that am Pierrot, pray you pity me!

## DANTE IN HELL

When Dante Alighieri entered that hollow place  
Hell and saw wild whirls of confused smoke  
Like glaring tapers round a painted face  
And found himself among such evil folk  
God had condemned—for where in heaven a space  
For such as these?—and saw under the yoke  
Of shameful sins, the inevitable disgrace  
The earth endured ere the first woman spoke  
One word to the man she loved not; then his eyes  
Darkened a little, and as Virgil came  
Nearer to him, the whole sense of that impure  
Air and its heat and its intolerable flame  
Tortured his vision, and he felt the obscure  
Desire of an unenviable Paradise.

## SONNET

O Divine Water loved by Æschylus,  
Who, God in Man, created Tragedy  
Out of void Chaos' aching agony,  
And, out of the anguish of Prometheus  
Gave to the Fire-Bringer who rules over us  
More than Zeus gave man, fire-fledged Sorcery  
And a bewitched life over the Caspian Sea,  
Loveless, but adored by the winds perilous  
That toss the sea-waves into hostile storms;  
Seeing in midnights more prodigious forms,  
And in the noon's heats hell's insanities;  
And for his heart, that seat of ancient wrongs,  
The winged Oceanides and their scented  
songs:  
Last, God-created Aristophanes.

### SONNET

Why is it that you use your fascination  
Of fatal beauty that has power to ensnare  
Even the serpents in their violation  
Of all that's sane in webs of woven hair  
And set them into deeds of vile sedition  
As rebels round a city mutinous  
That fall into the folds of their perdition  
And are for that more subtly poisonous?  
Simply that you are impelled by an obsession  
To do all evil and to do no good,  
As a pure virgin in her first confession  
Lets out the secret of her innocent blood,  
Nor sees in the hidden monk behind the grate  
A conscience-stricken face consumed with  
hate.



## DEIRDRE

There was much crying in the wind  
Late last night  
As of the crying of a soul that had sinned  
And longed for the light.

But I have seen to-day  
With John in a café a child  
Who seemed so tragic, that play  
Was lost to her, never she smiled.

Adorable, passionate,  
Loveless, the child in her chair,  
Casting her eyes down, sat—  
The Sun might have envied her hair.

She had taken my hand, then turned  
Her eyes on me, pure as the sky.  
If ever a man's heart to her yearned,  
Mine did, I know not why.

## THE HOUR

You might put a little life  
Into this sullen hour.  
The world is sick of strife:  
Why all this lust for power?

Each minute some man dies:  
Dead men rise never again.  
The cold and cruel skies  
Look down upon the slain.

## THE OLD GYPSY

She is too old to see again  
The age of threescore years and ten;  
She is as hale as an old tree,  
Straight as its shrivelled stem, and dark  
And full of wrinkles as its bark;  
Children and grandchildren has she,  
Fourteen they are and forty-three,  
And sixty years has she been wed,  
And never slept in any bed  
Under a roof of tile or slate,  
And never will, alive or dead,  
And whether death come soon or late.  
Her hands are heavy with gold rings,  
She has three rings of heavy gold  
On every finger, earrings old  
Of gold, and gold and orange things  
For kerchiefs and head-coverings.  
Her voice is gentle as a bird's,  
And there is savour in her words,  
For she, although with stealth she hoards  
The private speech her people have,  
Knows well the depth of every lav.

Her eyes are secret, and her mouth  
A gentle and grave hypocrite ;  
She reads the heart of age and youth,  
Seeing, not understanding it,  
And tells for money half the truth ;  
But in her ancient soul there lies,  
Deeper than she can ever look,  
The roots laid open like a book  
Of earth and of our destinies.

## THE JEW

A poor old man, a crossing-sweeper, stands  
Bent on his broom that sweeps a foot of way;  
A fat, furred Jew with jewels on his hands  
Passes the crossing-sweeper twice a day.

His eyes are swollen with covetousness and fat,  
His fingers swell about his jewelled rings;  
Into the old man's stained and battered hat  
A penny, once a month or so, he flings.

The old man, who is humble, poor, and wise,  
Takes up the penny and says Thank you, Sir;  
And the kind Jew, to purify his eyes,  
Rivets them back upon his rings and fur.

## NIGHT AT HAMPSTEAD

The damp and sweet breath of the night!  
Lean out of the window, your cheek on the ivy,  
My cheek on your cheek, O my dear and delight!

Look up now, the stars overhead!  
Look yonder, the gas where it trembles reflected,  
Three flames on the glass with its socket of lead.

See there, where the leaves of the trees,  
Black shadows that droop on the wall and its  
    whiteness,  
Weave the dark into lace that flaps loose in the  
    breeze.

See the trees, the great trees by the house,  
The trees where the light is the ghost of the day-  
    light,  
And the trees with the night tangled fast in their  
    boughs.

Dream on then, my dear and delight!  
The breath of the world pulses faint in the city,  
Here is the damp and sweet breath of the night.

## TO A GREY DRESS

There's a flutter of grey through the trees:

Ah, the exquisite curves of her dress as she  
passes

Fleet with her feet in the path where the grass  
is!

I see not her face, I but see

The swift re-appearance, the flitting persistence——

There!—of that flutter of grey in the distance.

It has flickered and fluttered away:

What a teasing regret she has left in my day-  
dream,

And what dreams of delight are the dreams that  
one may dream!

It was only a flutter of grey;

But the vaguest of raiment impossible chances  
Has set my heart beating the way of old dances.

## THE FLOODS AND THE ASHES

Love that hath eaten ashes, and hath mingled  
weeping

Into his drink and bread;

That hath been in cities fallen, a sentinel keeping

Watch where a host has fled;

Love that hath watched by night when every man  
was sleeping,

How have men called thee dead?

The floods have lifted up, O Love our Lord, their  
voices,

The floods lift up their waves;

Thou that art mightier than many waters' noises

Shall from the deep sea-graves

Lift up alive the soul that in thy love rejoices,

Love that is lord and saves.



## CLEOPATRA

Your eyes have drunk Eternity:  
They haunt me in oblivious hours,  
And follow me among the flowers;  
Your eyes hold fast the mystery  
Of other memories than ours.

Within your immemorial eyes  
There sits the cruelty of Time  
In its indifference sublime;  
Empty, and infinitely wise,  
Your eyes out-reach the bounds of Time.

I gaze into your endless gaze,  
I lose myself as in a sea;  
I love myself, content to be  
A stream that all its nights and days  
Lives but to die into the sea.

## BANISHMENT

That you should live, be blithe and well,  
When I am dead and in my grave,  
It seems a thing incredible  
If Death be not a lying knave.

My life began with yours, and now  
In my sad dark oblivion  
I shall not know how long or how  
I am to leave you to go on.

I shall be somewhere, I suppose,  
For nothing that began can end:  
What is it worth to be a rose  
And not to recognise one's friend?

What if the love that makes my soul  
A thing identical with you  
Should lose in some vast selfless whole  
That single self we came into?

How could I, being that speechless thing,  
Cry out, or in the rose's scent  
Of inmost ardour breathe and bring  
You news out of my banishment?

## IN REGENT'S PARK

Is it the chilly winter grass  
That seems as green as if to lay  
A carpet for the spring to pass?  
Is it a gladness in the day  
That wakes this joy upon my way?

Is it that idly I observe  
The misty trees, the water's white?  
For all my body is a nerve  
Strung for the fingers of delight,  
And earth is musical with light.

Dear, once we wandered in this park,  
Strangers together, side by side,  
At the grey falling of the dark;  
And now, how many leagues divide  
Our feet, and how the world is wide!

And yet to-day, though you are far  
And I am lonely, how my soul  
Leaps out to find you where you are,  
Because a word has put the whole  
Of life into a dream's control!

Love that makes wisdom foolish, makes  
The folly of the lover wise,  
Who out of dreams of beauty wakes  
To see the world with subtler eyes,  
And turns delight to Paradise.

Blind love, that brings the gift of sight,  
Makes and unmakes the world anew;  
I see all beauty in the light  
Of my imaginings of you:  
All's beauty, since a dream came true!

## TO THE DEAD

Is there a waking sorrow in the grave?

Is it not over, all that holds from sleep?

No more the heavy-footed hours shall creep,

No more in vain man's longing heart shall crave.

The long suspense is over; earth that gave

Calls back the gift—Ah, who should strive to  
keep?

Dust over dust, a little narrow heap

Holds all we love—Ah, who should strive to save?

Peace, peace is yours, O dead, and yours alone.

What peace hath man, unstable man, whose  
breath

Serves but in vain to winnow fruitless chaff?

Yet will he ever seek, who ne'er hath known

The flying phantom Peace, till lastly Death

Writes in that word the final Epitaph.

## HAPPINESS

Happiness, too warm and deep,  
Shuts the eyes of love asleep,  
Love that watching for the thief  
Is only kept awake by grief.  
Fear not grief : take grief for a crutch ;  
But fear to be happy overmuch.  
The heart beats like a passing bell :  
All is not well, when all is too well !  
And the heart that watches, watches less  
When it's well afloat upon happiness.

## A SONG AGAINST SORROW

Only there must be no ending!  
If your heart's afraid of winter,  
Where an open door is standing  
Go your ways and do not enter.  
If you enter I retain you  
For the soft and stormy weather,  
And we watch the world together  
While you hold me, while I chain you.

Time's a stream and love is fleeting,  
And to-day is soon to-morrow,  
And the hours grow tired repeating  
Joy but not repeating sorrow.  
What's the message Time is sending?  
"Roses fade and daylight closes,  
Lovers' joys are like the roses";  
Only, there must be no ending!

## THE OWL

I heard the hooting of the White Owl,  
Not as far off as the sea,  
And in the sultry passion of the night  
I knew not what came to me;  
Only the voice of an inhuman thing  
Thrilled in my ears,  
And I stood lonely, listening,  
As if from the eternal years  
The Owls had hooted, as if the Owls had  
sinned  
And had eaten some insane root,  
The moon, the night, the mystery of the  
wind,  
Myself, and the White Owl's hoot.



## THE SONG OF THE POPPIES

It is a great thing to be born,  
A greater thing to live.  
Red and black poppies, you are torn  
Out of the heart of darkness; scent  
That I breathe is poisonous.  
For my scent are you meant  
Things forgotten to forgive?  
Leaf with leaf has grandeur and  
I think that you understand  
Why it is you have to live,  
Flame without shame, luxurious,  
Dragging at the roots of us.  
Rudely rooted from the soil,  
For you face me in my room,  
Dazing me with your perfume,  
Not one breath of air to soil  
Your beauty stranger than all things.  
For you are the Kings of Kings  
In the region of the flowers.  
In the halls of Hades you  
Counted the enchanted hours  
For ravished Proserpine his bride,

Where the black-winged raven flew  
By the sullen Styx's side.  
Earth cries out of her acrid womb,  
As she sees you: Can I forgive  
All that glory of your life,  
I that am neither maid nor wife,  
I that know not night from morn?  
It is a great thing to be born,  
A greater thing to live.

## SONG

My silks I put away  
Into a scented room  
Where the night-moths can play  
With their own perfume.

And then away I went  
But left a lovely cloth  
To perfume with its scent  
The perfumed moth.

## SONG OF THE FIRE

There is a great passion in the Fire  
That glows with glamour and flames  
Into colours more fierce than Fame's  
And the Song of the fire is the song of its  
    desire.

The fire eats the heart of the wood  
Until into ashes it turns  
And the wood burns and the fire burns  
And the fire's blood drinks the wood's  
    blood.

## **THE ROSE AND THE RAIN**

**Her rose fell off in the rain  
And I picked it out of the mud.  
The scene was Madrid in Spain,  
And why did it touch my blood?**

**She knew (what nobody knows)  
What was the reason in Spain  
That I never gave back her rose,  
That she followed me back in the rain.**

## A VISION OF KINGS

Kings have cast down their crowns for this  
One word of the Unattainable.  
The very Slaves of the Abyss  
Are named by this. Hell is not Hell,  
Nor is God only in Heaven alone:  
Silent in Heaven is God's name.  
So, as time's measured by a stone  
And all the stars are mocked by flame  
And the world moves always and the Sun  
Shines and the moon fades out in turn  
And all that we have ever done  
Shall, somehow, as the world might, burn:  
So, all the Fate that falls on Kings  
Shall fail as fails each period,  
And the beginning and the end of things  
Move somewhere out of sight of God.

## THE CROSS

When Jesus Christ was crucified  
A sudden darkness fell.  
The hearts in the three Maries cried:  
He hath gone down to Hell!  
And then again the darkness broke  
And still the Cross was there.  
Satan behind the Cross like smoke  
Tossed in the wind his hair.

Over their heads a vulture swung,  
One heard the gallows creak,  
And still nailed on His Cross there hung  
Christ and His eyes did speak.  
Then Satan turned his back in spite,  
His shadow transverse fell.  
Judas Iscariot, hot as night,  
Gaped like the mouth of Hell.

**IV SILHOUETTES**  
**(To JOSÉ MARIA DE ELIZANDO)**





## A DEATH IN THE FOREST

The wind is loud among the trees to-night,  
It sweeps the heavens where the stars are white  
I know: it is the angel with the sword.  
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord!

The wind is loud, I hear it in my brain,  
I hear the rushing voices of the rain,  
Hers in the rain, and his that once implored.  
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord!

Hands in the trees, hands in the flowing grass,  
They wave to catch my spirit as I pass.  
I have no hope to pass the ghastly ford.  
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord!

I see her tresses, floating down the wind:  
Her eyes are bright: it is for these I sinned.  
We sinned, and I have had my own reward.  
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord!

She has a little mouth, a little chin:  
God made her to be beautiful in sin,  
God made her perfectly, to be adored.  
Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord!

We sinned, but it is I who pay the price:

I say that she shall dwell in Paradise.

For me the feast in hell is on the board.

Ah, not the woman, not the woman, Lord!

## IN THE CATHEDRAL AT BARCELONA

Out of the sun a sudden shade,  
The shadow of the wings of God,  
As if the Holy Dove had laid  
Dim quiet on the holy sod.

What cool, what infinite repose!  
Behold the nearer heaven on high,  
And, through the window of the rose,  
Purple and gold and rose, the sky.

## BARCELONA

The white and brown of fifty masts  
Chequer the depths of blue below,  
Where in the harbour, to and fro,  
The little white sails go.

A mule mounts slowly up the hill,  
A red-capped peasant, half-asleep,  
Nods on his back; the small black sheep  
In slow procession creep.

Far as to where the mountains meet  
The sky that gently silvers down  
The roofs and windows of the town  
Swarm grey and white and brown.

Filmy and blue the sky above,  
A burning blue the depths below,  
Where in the harbour, to and fro,  
The little white sails go.

## PANTORBO

Salvator Rosa piled those rocks,  
Thus wildly, under that wild light,  
Or else fantastic Nature mocks  
His finite with her infinite.

Grey ruinous heights that rise in towers,  
That fall in gorges down the steep,  
Stark trees that never feel the showers,  
And rocky torrents buried deep.

Tormented wrathful ghosts of hills  
That bear the scars of ancient woes,  
And chafe beneath the doom that fills  
Their hollows with a loathed repose.

## MADRID

A beggar smoking a cigar,  
Here at the corner of the street,  
Strums feebly on an old guitar.

He strums an air half sad, half sweet,  
An air of laughter and of cries,  
Here at the corner of the street.

The beggar lifts his sightless eyes  
While the pathetic music thrills  
The air with laughter and with cries.

Rattling the plate that never fills  
A woman reaches piteous hands  
While the pathetic music thrills.

Wrapt in his cloak the beggar stands,  
Impassive, while the wife implores——  
A woman reaching piteous hands.

## IN THE PRADO

The black mantilla drapes with grace  
The lustrous blackness of her hair,  
And to the pallor of her face  
Gives that bewitching air.

Her closed fan rests against her cheek  
Just where the dimple might have been;  
She turns her head, and seems to seek  
Her subjects, proudly, like a queen.

I see the lady of my dream:  
'Tis she, I am not here in vain.  
Her body's rhythm, and the gleam  
Her eyes are lit with—this is Spain!



## BORDEAUX

The dull persistence of the rain,  
Long melancholy streets, the vain  
    Desire, the hopeless wandering;  
Here every woman has a face  
Inexorably commonplace,  
    Ennui is over everything.

Hour after leaden hour goes by,  
I watch the leaden-coloured sky,  
    I watch the rain still fall and fall.  
Women and gaiety and flowers——  
When they are ours, why, all is ours!  
    Here Ennui is the lord of all.

## NIGHT AT ARLES

Down the deserted street  
A figure black from head to feet,  
Save where a lifted skirt betrays  
A gleam of whiteness, strays.

The moonlight, softly shed  
Upon her veiled and stately head,  
Lays all its ardour of repose  
About her as she goes.

No woman queenlier stept,  
Nor goddess, since Diana slept  
Beside her sisters, when the gods  
Perished from their abodes.

## ROME

Here, at the summit of this sacred wood,  
    I seem to be half-way from Rome to heaven.  
    Eternal as the world, I see the seven  
Hills of the world's desire, that have withstood  
The lust of Kings, God's jealous fatherhood,  
    The snare of ancient beauty that was given  
    Back to the world for the world's woe, and even  
The Barbarian's insolent and destroying brood.

The clouds wander above me, and beneath  
    The vague Campagna wanders desolate;  
    I see the roofs, the turrets and the dome.  
And the pale air seems to exhale like breath  
    The melancholy and most delicate  
    And haughty and remembering soul of Rome.

## IN THE CAMPAGNA

Love dies not but it sleeps:

Here, where the peace of Rome,  
Passing all knowledge, keeps  
My heart within its home,  
I have known that repose  
Which only slumber knows.

Here where my feet are set

Upon the asphodels,  
I can for once forge  
The world contains aught else  
But these, the grass, the seven  
Hills, and the opal heaven.

Peace nestles from the sky

In these soft veils of air;  
Bid love prepare to die,  
Which is mine only care.  
If he his breath still keeps,  
Hush, be content: love sleeps.

### AT THE THREE FOUNTAINS

Here, where God lives among the trees,  
Where birds and monks the whole day sing  
His praises in a pleasant ease,

O heart, might we not find a home,  
Here, after all our wandering?  
These gates are closed, even on Rome.

Souls of the twilight wander here;  
Here, in the garden of that death  
Which was for love's sake, need we fear

How sharp with bitter joy might be  
Love's lingering, last, longed-for breath,  
Shut in upon eternity?

VESTIGIA. I. ROMAN MEDALLION

Ah! if you knew how vain are these delicious  
tears!

How little so divine and desultory a thing  
As this hour's love, alas, will seem, remembering  
These tears, this hour, and this hour's love, in  
other years!

The chaplet of white fading roses, one by one,  
Petal from petal falling on some pensive day;  
Noontide upon the shining beach, while on the  
bay

A fisher's boat came slowly drifting with the sun;

Yes, and the vase of precious porcelain that you  
broke;

The day you lost that ring, the day you bought  
this gem:

You will remember these things, and, ah yes, with  
them

The day that your heart answered mine before it  
spoke.

## II. ROMAN MEDALLION

To Lena in Naples

Let me not promise to remember you  
Because you have been either fair or kind;  
Are there not many kind fair women who  
Have filled and who have faded from my mind?

And yet I think that when in days to be  
I think of Naples and these April days,  
Something of you will wander back to me  
Along the undiscoverable ways.

Ah, what? That we have seen some Carmen die,  
Or some spectacular burial of the Christ,  
You may remember, if you will; but I.

The satin of your ears, your cheeks' fine silk,  
And that your mouth was like a melon sliced,  
And that your neck tasted as fresh as milk.

## HYMN TO GOD

### I

Father of Energy,  
Pattern of Beauty, uncreated Light,  
Fire of the flaming deep, most awful height  
Of Air, and endless motion of the Sea,  
True centre of the Earth, Imagination's  
Immovable foundations,  
Wings of the Wind, and thought out-reaching  
Thought,  
Health of the spirit, the sole Music wrought  
Out of the spheres' once jangled harmony,  
And, lastly, Love;  
Thou, who dost secretly and sweetly move  
Through all created things,  
Hear while thy mighty creatures cry to thee,  
Veiling their proud eyes with their wings.

### II

Thy creatures, that have wandered from that line  
Thou sett'st them out of Chaos, that have gone  
About their many businesses, not Thine,  
Saying let my will, not Thy will be done;



Idolatrous, themselves deeming divine,  
Bowing down each to the other for a sign,  
Working for Thee in evil ways that run  
Quite round the circle of Thy pure design,  
Yet swerve not from the centre; these in vain  
Seek liberty, and pull against a chain,  
They draw but nearer Thee in the rebound;  
Wings have they, yet are rooted to the ground,  
Where Thou art; though unrooted they should  
fly,  
There art Thou also: hear Thy creatures cry.

## HYMN TO THE SEA

### I

When I remember, going listlessly  
Through the long, loud, bright tumult of the  
    street,  
The sea,  
There comes a silence into the dull air  
Thick with resounding blows  
As of a battle where vile armies meet;  
And I am suddenly aware  
As of a cleansing wind blown suddenly  
From somewhere far beyond the mild and sweet  
Half-human regions of the rose,  
A wind that has no message to repeat,  
That calls, and no man knows  
What voice is calling in the sea.

### II

I never loved the earth, that like a mother  
Talks to her children in a voice they know,  
Drawing her children close to one another  
And whispering old tales of long ago.  
I have no human love for man, my brother,

My dreams are not as his dreams, and I go  
A lonely way alone.  
I go alone to the uncompassionate sea;  
I hear no private sorrow in its moan;  
There are no tears  
In its bright, sorrowless crying, and from me  
The glittering friend I talk with never hears  
A whimpering for human sympathy.

## III

Call to me, call by night,  
Let me come out into the moonless dark.  
I see a vague shape growing slowly white  
Out of the night, and, hark!  
The soft plunge of the breakers on the sand,  
And the sharp shriek  
Of the resisting pebbles, as a hand  
Clutches the land,  
And then unclasps, and, indolently weak,  
Scatters the spoils it only seems to seek.  
Call to me out of the night,  
In the irresistible, old, unknown way;  
Say nothing; what is there to say?  
Is there a word for delight?  
I see the darkness moving, like a cloud  
With rims of gusty light;  
I hear an inarticulate voice crying aloud.

## IV

Unknown spirit that calls  
To the mysterious spirit housed in walls  
Of the body, and desiring liberty,  
Free spirit, promising  
Nothing but to be free,  
Call me this wandering  
And always restless guest  
That will not be at home within my breast,  
This never satisfied,  
Fluctuant, foster-brother of the tide;  
Call subtly, and release  
The secret of the waves' unresting peace,  
To set my eager spirit, if not free,  
Into some comparable activity.  
Call to me mostly when I seem  
To move through silken tangles of a dream  
Forgetting what wild seabird spirit in me  
Cries out for liberty.  
Call to me, till, returning to my mind  
In the loud city streets, busy with men,  
There come cool silence, and the night, and then,  
Borne inward to me, overflowing me,  
The breath of a salt wind  
And the voice of the sea.

## HYMN TO AIR

### I

Because the ways of breath  
Belong not to the soul,  
Which may not even control  
How it shall come on death;  
Therefore, beholding thus  
What secret and wise care  
Silently follows us,  
Let the soul praise the air!

### II

Shadow of life in me,  
August familiar, dear  
Companion ever near  
Whose form I may not see;  
I, when alone I walk  
With men walking, or trees,  
With this enchanter talk  
Of older things than these.

### III

This breath that enters in  
To warm and purify

---

The source of life which I  
Deem all my own within,  
Has felt the earth reel round  
From outer space that lies  
Somewhere beneath the ground,  
Somewhere above the skies.

## IV

This humble unseen friend  
Whom I go elbowing,—  
What if it bid take wing  
And in the spirit ascend  
Where foot hath never trod,  
Where bird hath never come,  
Where man may look on God  
And his thought find a home?

## V

Joy wraps me round in air,  
On mountain-heights I drink  
Rapture, until I think  
My being everywhere  
Into the universe;  
I laugh with divine mirth  
To see the pretty, fierce  
Babe-scamblings of the earth.

## VI

Yet, day by day more sure,  
This mercy, which I praise,  
Silently all my ways  
Doth follow, and endure,  
Buffeted, to control  
The ceaseless watch of death:  
I praise thee with my soul,  
Delicate air, for breath.

## HYMN TO BEAUTY

There is a tyrannous lord and taskmaster  
Whom men call Beauty. To be born his slave  
Is to be sleepless and a wanderer  
Always by day and night, and not to have  
The promise of much quiet in the grave.

The colours of the world are in a plot  
To snatch my spirit from me through the  
    eyes;  
They dance before me in a weedy knot  
Of woodland broideries.  
They lean to catch me from the woven skies,  
Woo me in light, and half  
Tempt with the sea's immeasurable laugh.  
Beauty is too much with me: I would live  
A free man, not a fugitive,  
Be for an interval  
The hourglass of the hours of sun and shower,  
And for one hour  
Feel with the drowsy oxen in the stall  
Nothing at all.



Only, it may not be;  
For the avenging Beauty follows me,  
And whips me from my sloth  
And goads me on to some new adoration.  
I cannot walk through any city street  
Where labour hardly elbows by starvation,  
But I must meet  
The inhuman Beauty both  
In subtly wasted cheeks and in the spilth  
Of the enriching gutter's plague-green filth.

Beauty is poured  
Out of the vats of darkness; Beauty runs  
Through leakages of suns,  
And scatters in the splinters of the seas.  
This naked wall is high enough to hoard  
Legions of beauty in its crevices,  
Enough for the immortal soul to endure;  
And the immortal sky is not more pure,  
Nor God  
More empty of defect, than this brown clod.

O infinite  
And endless spirit of the world's disguise,  
Spirit of lies,  
Beauty, the very light  
Wherein we see, the sight  
We see by, and the thing we seem to see,

Either give me  
Humility to be indeed content  
With that which thou hast lent,  
And grace to take it simply as my right,  
Or power not less divine  
Than thine,  
That I may make a world and call it mine.

## THE HUMAN FACE

To imagine God with a human face  
Is the utmost human disgrace;  
For since the Spirit of Evil trod  
Earth, none has seen the image of God.  
I speak not of Jesus, he was a child,  
God in Man, therefore was undefiled;  
For in the Virgin Mary's womb,  
He leapt, so small in so little a room;  
And, as he greatened span by span,  
Never was there a lovelier man,  
Never one more loved by a woman:  
For being human he was inhuman.  
By the Jews He was Crucified  
And still the Jews say that he died:  
But I say no; for from evil to worse  
Evil the Jews are given for a curse  
Miserly souls and unbelief.  
Judas, who hanged himself, was a Thief.

## NOTTE VENEZIANO

I slept in Venice. The bright windy day  
Merged into night, along the Zattere,  
Over the long Guidecca luminous.  
The night was bright and windy; and 't was thus  
I fell asleep and let the moonlight fall  
Across my face, and scatter on the wall;  
And thus I came into the moonlight spell.  
I dreamed; and in my dream a darkness fell  
Upon the land and water, and the night  
Poured like a flood across the infinite.  
Then, as I dreamed, the billowy darkness broke  
At some soft, slow, insinuating stroke,  
And lo! a little core of light began  
To waken softly, and its rays outran,  
And, by insensible degrees, increased  
Into the semblance of a phantom East;  
And the whole night gathered and overflowed,  
Flood upon flood, until a shining road  
Of level water lay out endlessly  
Into the outer reaches of the sea.  
I floated forth lightly upon it, and  
Suddenly, round me, there was no more land,

But rioting from the depths of the sea's caves,  
The shining floor broke into hollow waves,  
And rocked the house about me, and drove me on  
Into the night of waters. Land was gone,  
The whole live Earth shrank like a startled snail  
Into the shell of heaped-up waters, pale  
As moonlight in the moonlight, and now curled  
Under and over and round about the world.  
And the waves drew me, and the treacherous night  
Into the circle of its infinite  
Would fain have sucked me, and I saw the moon  
Laughing an evil laugh, and the stars swoon  
Into an ecstasy of merriment.  
Then, knowing I was wholly lost, I sent  
A great cry shouting up into the sky,  
And leapt upright, and with an echoing cry  
Over my head I heard the waters hiss;  
And I fell slowly down the sheer abyss,  
Age after endless age of such intense  
And unimaginably sharp suspense,  
That soul and body parted at the stroke;  
And with the utter anguish I awoke,  
And saw the night grow softly into day  
Outside my windows on the Zattere.















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